

worldrenew.net/nigeria

Mary Crickmore
West Africa Team Leader
mcrickmore@worldrenew.net

David Tyokighir
Program Consultant
dtyokighir@worldrenew.net

World Renew Canada
3475 Mainway
PO Box 5070 STN LCD 1
Burlington, ON L7R 3Y8
1-800-730-3490
Fax: 905-336-8344

World Renew US
1700 28th Street SE
Grand Rapids, MI 49508
1-800-552-7972
Fax: 616-224-8060

God's Warm Shelter of Hope

A Story of Transformation



by David Tyokighir
Program Consultant
Nigeria Team

Widows and orphans often pass through very painful and emotional moments. Those painful moments are worse if the affected widows and young orphans are poor and live in the midst of negative cultural practices with dehumanizing treatment. They are often vulnerable, stigmatized, discriminated against, and victimized. And they may suffer in silence without a caring listener.

Terrorism and other persistent violent attacks in northern Nigeria in the past decade have resulted in extremely high numbers of deeply traumatized widows and orphans. Many are poor and are often subjected to negative cultural practices, making their lives more miserable. World Renew is grateful to God for partnerships that help to make life more meaningful for widows and orphans.

World Renew's partner Beacon of Hope Initiative made use of resources from African Widow and Orphan Support to empower beneficiaries in northeastern Nigeria who were victims of terrorist attacks. Beneficiary widows in selected communities received economic empowerment training and financial aid for self-help economic ventures and for a carefully planned trauma healing program.

Saratu, a mother of seven children, became a widow when a suicide bomber killed her husband in 2014 in Damaturu, Yobe State, leaving her severely hurt and deeply traumatized to single-handedly care for herself and her children without adequate shelter and without a steady source of income. She notes that the trauma healing group sessions have unveiled new life and hope in her. She reports receiving emotional healing that has resulted in better sleep and a renewed zeal to move on in life. Like other widows involved in small self-help businesses, Saratu received support of approximately \$50 (USD) and is happily engaged in the sale of grains. She



Economic empowerment training of widows

reports a steady growth in business and is better able to financially and emotionally support herself and her seven children. She is also happy that she can provide service to others in the community.

Blessing, a mother of eight children, lost her husband in November 2014. She helplessly watched from a distance as her husband was killed and his body was burned by terrorists who invaded their home at night. She was devastated and deeply traumatized.

Becoming part of a trauma healing group and a business training program backed by African Widow and Orphan Support brought real blessing to Blessing. The financial support she received empowered her to start a goat-rearing venture and sales of dried fish. These efforts are bringing her significant income to meet basic needs and pay school fees for some of the children. At the end of the forgiveness session of the trauma healing program, Blessing was able to say she has forgiven those who killed her husband. This did not come easy but has brought emotional relief to Blessing.

Blessing says she has every reason to smile and thank God for his grace. Two of her children just graduated from the university, and she notes that the two children might have dropped out of school if not for the program intervention. She also testifies to improved emotional health and stability in her daily decision making.

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Traumatized orphans in north-eastern Nigeria are also being supported. World Renew remains grateful for the opportunity to make a positive impact in the lives of these young and poor orphans. It is always a challenge trying to select a few beneficiaries in target communities in view of so many candidates who have been orphaned because of persistent terrorist activities in northern Nigeria. Once the selection is made, caregivers are assembled and trained, schools are identified for the orphans, and their school fees are provided for a period of three years. About eleven orphans are supported in every target community.

Very often, mobilized and sensitized religious and community members who are able come alongside to support and mobilize more orphans. As we see these positive outcomes originating out of deep suffering among people created in God's image, our own faith is strengthened, and we remain hopeful that God is making all things new in the lives of many people in the target communities. We

trust that this renewal will be evident in the eyes of generations ahead of us and in the life to come. Just as God provided an angel to accompany Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego in a fiery furnace (Daniel 3:25-28), something similar is happening in different ways as young orphans receive support from people who are walking alongside them from distant lands. Who knows how God is shaping these young people, or what they will become in the future in Nigeria and beyond? In the midst of evil and intense suffering, God is fashioning and producing future leaders to glorify him and transform their communities.

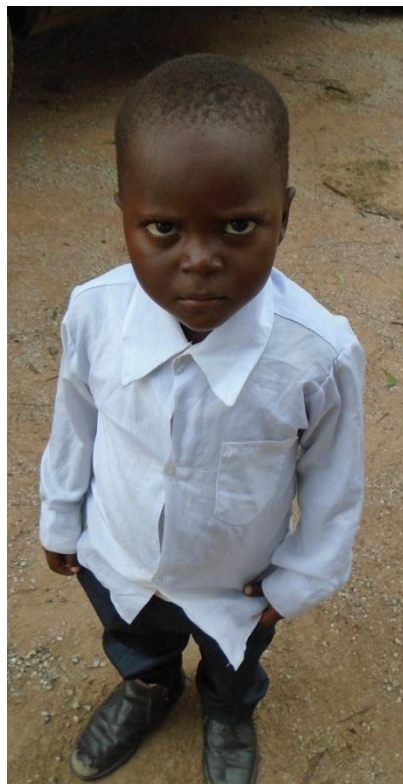
Randy Alcorn writes, "If we open our eyes, we'll see the problem of evil and suffering even when it doesn't touch us directly." World Renew is sincerely grateful to supporters for opening their eyes to see the plight of

poor widows and orphans in Nigeria. We give thanks for the generous support God is using to bring hope for many like young Paul, a beneficiary orphan from Gombi, Adamawa State. Beneficiaries join World Renew in saying a big thank-you to everyone involved in putting smiles on faces and healing in the hearts of those who are deeply hurt.

Beneficiary orphans from Gyekan, Adamawa State



An empowerment session with traumatized widows in Guyuk, Adamawa State



Paul, a beneficiary orphan in Gombi, Adamawa State

Prayers for Nigeria

Thank God for

- all who support the work of World Renew, and pray for God's abundant blessings on them.
- open doors and ministry opportunities to empower and work alongside the poor from different backgrounds and settings.
- safety in travel and protection for World Renew and partner staff.

Please pray for

- the repentance of all who perpetrate evil around the world, that they may find useful ways of living and relating with others.
- trauma healing and support for the many physical needs among people who have gone through difficult events.
- good governance by national leaders, peace, and restraint of evil that is affecting God's kingdom in several places around the world.